Cash 4 College

Cabrillo event offers help with financial aid forms to students, parents

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APTOS — It’s no secret that college costs have risen dramatically in the past several years and that trend shows no signs of stopping. Tuition increases can lead many would-be college students to the brink of frustration, causing many to toy with the idea of just not going at all.

That doesn’t need to be the case, say the financial advisers at Cabrillo College. There is money to be had for those who wish to attend college, and they want to help you find it.

The community college held its second “Cash 4 College” event Saturday in an effort to help students and parents learn about financial aid, answer questions and assist them with filling out the federal student aid forms. The event wasn’t just focused on Cabrillo though, and was instead held as a service for the whole community.

“We want to help students and their parents learn how to afford college,” Francisco Tostado, a Cabrillo College financial adviser said.

Tostado was instrumental in getting the event started, having seen many people struggle with financial aid questions and forms. Submitting an accurate and concise Free Application for Federal Student Aid, more commonly known as the FAFSA form, is a hugely important first step. The form is what students need to obtain state and federal grants, loans and other forms of financial assistance.

Though the form’s gotten a little easier in the past few years, according to Tostado, it can still be confusing, and an inaccurate form can cause a student to miss out on thousands of dollars in aid.

As a financial aid adviser, Tostado is used to hearing all sorts of questions about income and taxes, the latter of which can often be the most difficult, he said. But he and his fellow financial aid advisers are committed to helping navigate the difficult process.

He urges students to get their forms in early. For those hoping to attend college in the fall, the priority deadline for submitting the FAFSA is March 2.

If you missed Saturday’s session but find yourself in need of assistance, never fear. Financial aid information events such as Saturday’s, held in conjunction with the California Student Aid Commission, are held monthly at Cabrillo College. The next session is scheduled for noon to 2:30 p.m. Feb. 17 in the Student Activities Center West building, room 201, with another one scheduled after that on March 2, same time and same location.

Laura Lettunich helps Sandra Frank and Jeremy Nelson negotiate a financial aid website at Cabrillo College’s ‘Cash 4 College’ event Saturday at the school.

AT A GLANCE

For information about college financial aid, contact Cabrillo College’s Financial Aid and Scholarships Office at 479-6415.